

Using apps for planning a walk

If you have access to a smartphone, then technology can be a great help when planning a walk and when you're out walking. Apps can show where you are, help you plan a route, and give information about your walk.

But it's important to remember that technology can fail, so it's a good idea to not rely on it alone – draw upon local knowledge if you're walking in an area you know, don't forget to do a practice walk, and carry a paper map as well. A compass can be useful too in more rural areas.

This guide gives an overview of some of the apps available to consider when planning and to use them when on your walk.

What Technology Can Help With

Good navigation technology can:

- Help you plan your walk before you set off
- Show your current location
- Tell you your speed, elevation and distance travelled
- Record your route so you can use it again
- Let you share your walk with others
- Show updated map features that might not be on older paper maps
- Help you plan walks using your phone or computer
- Suggest walks that others have already done

However, don't rely only on your phone. Smartphones can fail because:

- Signal can disappear
- Batteries run out quickly, especially in cold weather
- Screens don't always work well when wet
- Phones are not always waterproof or robust if dropped

Tips for Using Your Phone Safely on Walks

Think about:

- Do you have a waterproof/shockproof case?
- Does your battery last well? Do you carry a power bank?
- Will your screen work with gloves or when wet?
- What will you do if you lose signal or your phone stops working?
- Do you have another way to call for help if needed?
- In urban areas, be aware that using your phone will increase its visibility. Think about where you carry it to reduce the possibility of it being stolen.

Remember – check for poor phone signal during your practice walk.

Download a route before you set off to save your phone battery life.

Digital mapping services like OS Maps or apps like Outdooractive can be very helpful. You can:

- Plan routes and use pre-planned routes
- Check distances and uphill sections
- See your position on a digital map
- Save routes to follow later
- Can be used on your smartphone (on the walk) as well as your laptop (for planning)

Locate Me is a feature **inside the OS Maps app** and is not a standalone mapping app. The **OS Locate app has been discontinued** and removed from app stores, and its functions have now been **integrated into the OS Maps app**. It gives you:

- A simple digital compass
- Location sharing features
- Your current height above sea level
- It uses satellites, not phone signal — so it can work even when you don't have reception.
- It's not a full map, but it's a handy tool to help confirm where you are.

Smartphone apps: It's likely your smartphone will be preloaded with a map app such as Google Maps which can help you, but these are likely to be better used in urban areas and not for countryside walking.

The **Ramblers App** is a free tool for members offering access to over 3,500 walking routes, 50,000+ group walks in Great Britain, a digital membership card, and exclusive gear discounts. It requires a smartphone and features tools for finding local walks.

There are also many apps available for urban walking that you may find useful. Many are free to download, and some allow you to download and use maps offline so that you are not using your mobile data.

Some examples of apps for urban walking include:

Go Jauntly: Helps find walks in your area and good for urban walking. In London it provides information on Tube stations, and accessibility in relation to walks.

GPSmyCity (1,500+ Cities): Your phone becomes a tour guide using this app – 1000's of self-guided and themed walks are on offer for all tastes – whether you like historical features or to check out local cafes and pubs.

Walk the city: Navigation by photos which provides clear and step by step instructions through parts of a city.

Legsplorer: Self guided tours that can be customized by you – based on your mood, interests and how far you want to walk.

Citymapper: Mainly used for public transport information but does provide a walking feature. It will take you through safe areas and well-lit routes which could be useful for shorter walks.

(We aren't endorsing these apps but this is an overview of apps available.)

[Find further information on navigation technology.](#)

Watch these videos if you're going further afield and out into the countryside and want more information on [navigation tools](#) and [maps](#).